

K Anne Designs  
Kerri Besse  
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Summary by Sadie Fosdick

There is more to a career than climbing the corporate ladder, as Kerri Besse explained. Besse is a 2003 graduate of URI's Textiles, Fashion Merchandising and Design Department with a minor in Art. After graduating, Besse began her career working in high-end fashion for a few years before returning to school. She enrolled in classes at the Fashion Institute of Technology to gain more knowledge about textiles and surface design. It was after her return to school that Besse found an interest in the weaving and rug industries. Today, Besse is self-employed and does freelance work for multiple interior textile companies.

Besse emphasized the importance of defining your own personal mission statement and idea of success, and how these ideas can change and develop throughout your career. She stressed the fact that your career is not everything in life, but just one part of what makes up the person. When navigating your professional and personal life, Besse asked us not to let our decisions be fueled by fear. There will be many paths we can take after graduation, and as we continue into our adult lives we should not feel limited.

Besse herself has held many different roles within the industry and found that her experiences working with the supply chain and understanding construction and logistics has helped make her a better designer. As she has moved through her career, Besse has been careful to maintain any relationships she made along the way as the industry is small and you never know when a connection could resurface. Throughout her career, Besse remains true to her own mission while remembering to cater to the customer base she is serving at the time. Always keeping the customer's interests in mind helps to foster a loyal customer base which can carry a company through tough times. This was especially evident throughout the pandemic.

With longer lead times and higher prices, the textile industry has faced many challenges due to the pandemic. Raw materials are more expensive and difficult to source, prices of shipping containers have skyrocketed, and labor shortages have caused backups all along the supply chain. These factors have pushed the industry to operate on an increasingly virtual level, but this comes with its own difficulties. While communicating virtually can save time and reduce waste, it can be difficult to ensure quality and color through a screen. New innovations, however, can help the industry more successfully adapt to this virtual business environment.

The main message that Besse wanted to impart on us is that our careers will not be linear, and we should not expect them to be. Young adults entering the workforce assume that they will spend the first chunk of their careers climbing the ladder of success, continually growing into higher level positions. The truth is, in Besse's experience, you will find yourself moving laterally, sometimes down, sometimes up, and sometimes finding yourself on a different path altogether.